



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS  
Representing over 1,000 liberal religious congregations



# GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008

A MEETING OF CONGREGATIONS FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

## Greening the 2008 UUA General Assembly

### EVENT AT A GLANCE:

Unitarian Universalist  
Association  
General Assembly

June 25 – 29, 2008  
Fort Lauderdale  
Convention Center

2917 Attendees  
90 Exhibitors

The primary success of the 2008 General Assembly greening initiative can be summed up in one sentence: the Unitarian Universalist Association has taken Fort Lauderdale's hospitality community to a deeper shade of green.

Progress toward sustainability has to be measured from where you start. Since 2005 the Unitarian Universalist Association has continued to make progress in implementing green meeting practices. This process has involved improving internal practices as well as working with vendors to expand their practices.

UUA's commitment to sustainable meetings was honored with the 2008 Silver Green Meeting Award from IMEX and the Green Meeting Industry Council for the 2007 General Assembly. Having achieved so much success with the Portland Assembly, organizers were challenged to meet and exceed the bar set by this event in 2008.

Fort Lauderdale, however, was up for the challenge. Through the support of the county convention and visitors bureau, engagement of the hotel community and cooperation of the convention center UUA's 2008 General Assembly actually exceeded Portland's performance in terms of destination and accommodation management as well as on-site practices. In addition the UUA has remained pro-active about making communications and marketing for the event more sustainable.

Lack of available infrastructure for composting and the newness of recycling programs did create challenges that reduced diversion rates from 2007; however both have been used as learning opportunities for UUA and vendors and as a result will become key considerations when selecting and working with future General Assembly destinations.

UUA can feel a sense of accomplishment that the 2008 General Assembly has left the city of Fort Lauderdale much better prepared to host sustainable meetings due to our cooperative work to implement unprecedented convention programs that promote reduced waste, wise energy management, more environmentally responsible purchasing, and community service.

## GREENING BY THE NUMBERS

The Unitarian Universalist Association is pleased to report the following measurable outcomes of the 2008 General Assembly:

**3** The number of hotel properties in Fort Lauderdale with new Florida Green Hotel Lodging Program Certification: the Embassy Suites, Hyatt Pier 66 and Comfort Suites. Properties attributed their drive for certification to preparations made for UUA's General Assembly. Congratulations to our hotel partners!

**21** The quantity of new, permanent recycling bins purchased by the Fort Lauderdale Convention Centre to accommodate the new recycling program requested by the UUA. General Assembly was the first event to use these new bins which are part of a new permanent co-mingled recycling program implemented at Fort Lauderdale Convention Center. In addition, 60 temporary bins were rented.

**18%** The percentage of waste diverted from landfill for the General Assembly. This is an 8% increase in waste diversion at the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center. Prior to the General Assembly the convention center was only diverting cardboard, achieving approximately 10% diversion. The addition of a permanent co-mingled recycling program for plastic, metals and paper at the request of UUA resulted in an increase to 18% diversion.

**\$5406** Donations received from attendees for the Carbon Fund's offset program. The Carbon Fund supports diverse renewable energy, energy efficiency and reforestation projects that reduce atmospheric emissions. This represents 540.6 tons of carbon dioxide.

**100%** All hotel properties participating in General Assembly used environmentally responsible cleaners, had recycling in place, implemented towel/sheet reuse, did not replace amenities after one night, and did not use polystyrene. This is the first time UUA has been able to report 100% compliance in these five areas.

**1080 lbs** Food left over food that was donated to the local Fort Lauderdale food bank.

**5** number of trees saved per year by not printing and sending out pre-event mailers.

**\$500** Funds donated to the Broward County Parks and Recreation Commission by the Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitor's Bureau to support local native tree planting as a legacy of the General Assembly.

**\$0.00** Cost incurred by the UUA to request and provide concession menus with additional vegan, vegetarian, local and organic options.

**20%** Percentage of concession food that was sourced locally and organically (by weight).

## EVENT REPORTS

In order to help UUA understand and track the environmental performance of their General Assembly Meeting Strategies Worldwide has prepared the following post-event reports. These reports have been created using the MeetGreen® Calculator. Practices included in and measured by the Calculator reflect leadership-level green meeting practices that exceed Convention Industry Council green guidelines and US Environmental Protection Agency procurement policy. Each practice is weighted according to the positive environmental impact of a decision made. Minimum points are achieved for intention while maximum points are awarded for measurable action. For example, requesting recycling at the convention centre receives minimum points, while tracking and achieving a high recycling diversion rate would receive maximum points. Reports show the percentage of total points possible achieved by the UUA.

Having tracked four years of the General Assembly Meeting Strategies Worldwide is pleased to provide UUA with the following illustration of its overall environmental achievements in each of the following eight areas of conference management:

1. Destination Selection
2. Accommodation Selection
3. Transportation Selection
4. Meeting & Venue Selection
5. Food and Beverage
6. Exhibition Services
7. Communications & Marketing
8. On-site Office

### Conference Summary Report

The Conference Summary Report shows the environmental performance of the General Assembly over the last four years in each area measured. As is indicated by the graph the UUA General Assembly 2008 improved most significantly in the areas of destination and accommodation selection and on-site office. The conference maintained 2007 levels in communications & marketing. Dips in performance are noted in the remaining sections. These are explained in detail below but primarily indicate a lower recycling diversion rate, lack of composting and the use of ground shuttles to transport attendees.

### Total Conference Comparison Report

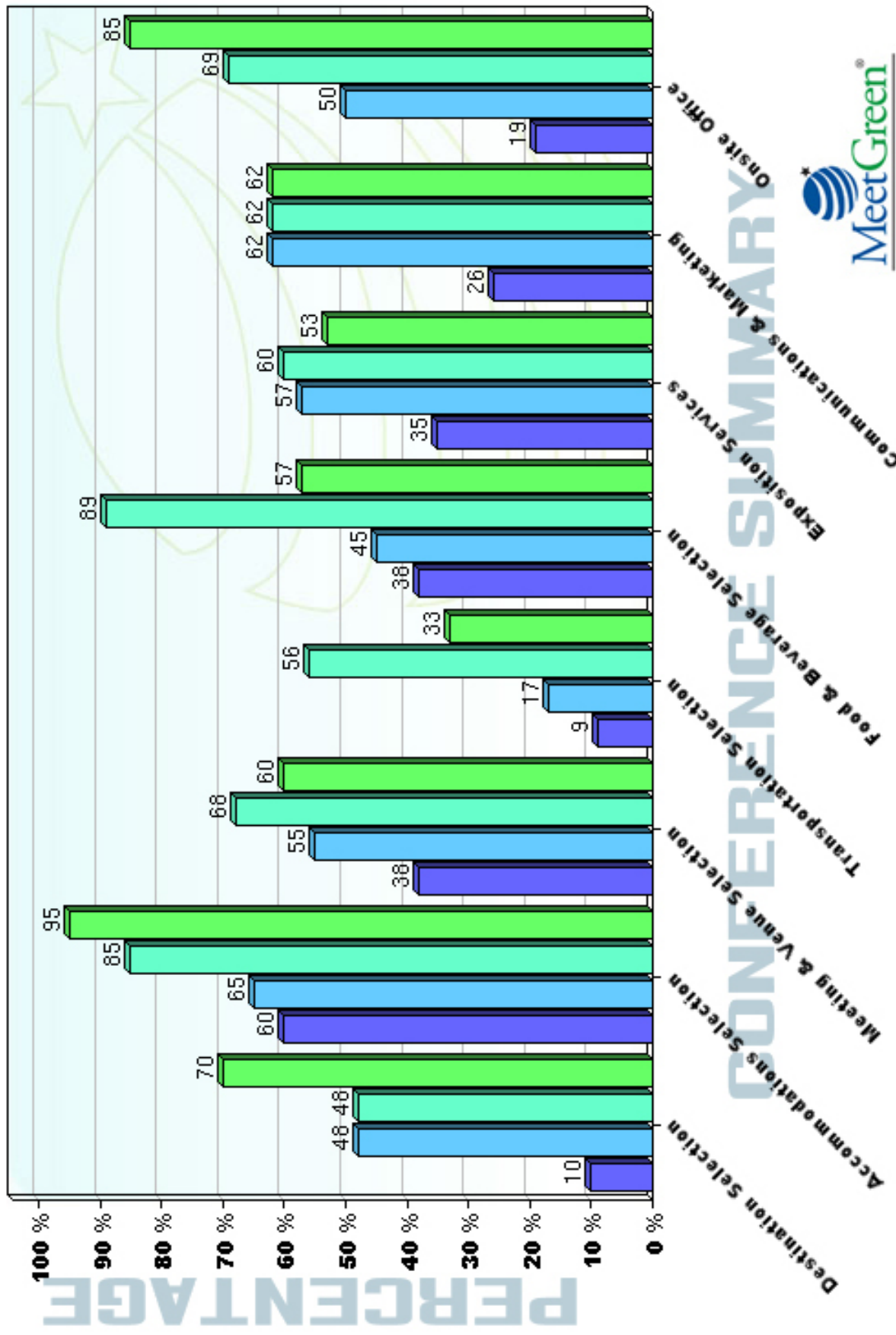
This chart illustrates how the General Assembly has compared to all other conferences tracked by Meeting Strategies Worldwide in terms of total environmental performance.

### Category Reports

These charts (eight in total) illustrate the total MeetGreen® scores in each of the eight categories of meeting management assessed by Meeting Strategies Worldwide.

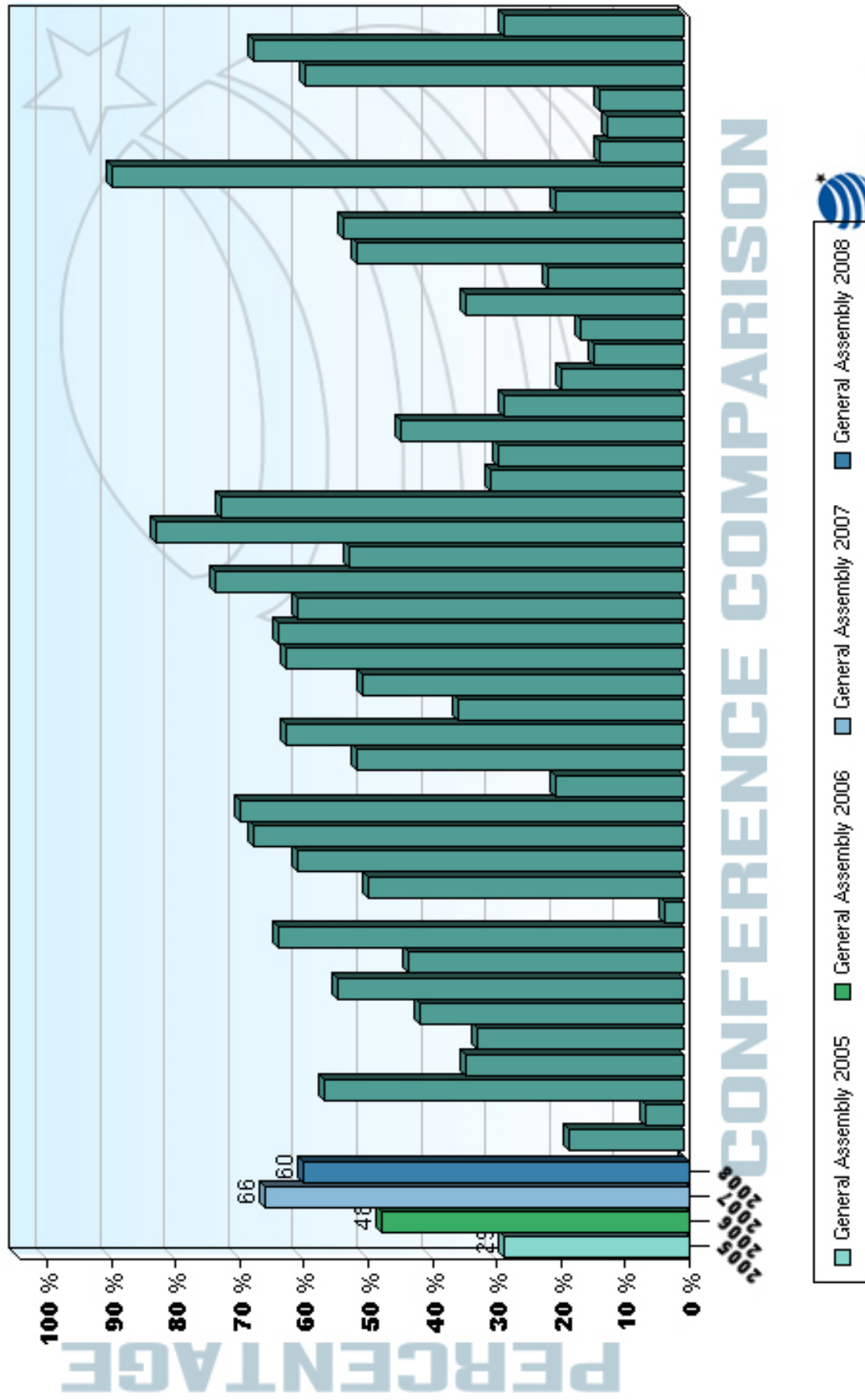
# Conference Summary Report

■ General Assembly 2005  
 ■ General Assembly 2006  
 ■ General Assembly 2007  
 ■ General Assembly 2008



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# Total Conference Comparison Report



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## Destination Selection

Moving from Portland, Oregon to Fort Lauderdale, Florida it was clear that different destinations have different capacities to meet UUA's green expectations. Despite local infrastructure challenges that made recycling difficult and composting not possible, the CVB and local vendors did make significant strides to meet UUA's expectations.

Points earned in this category are a reflection of:

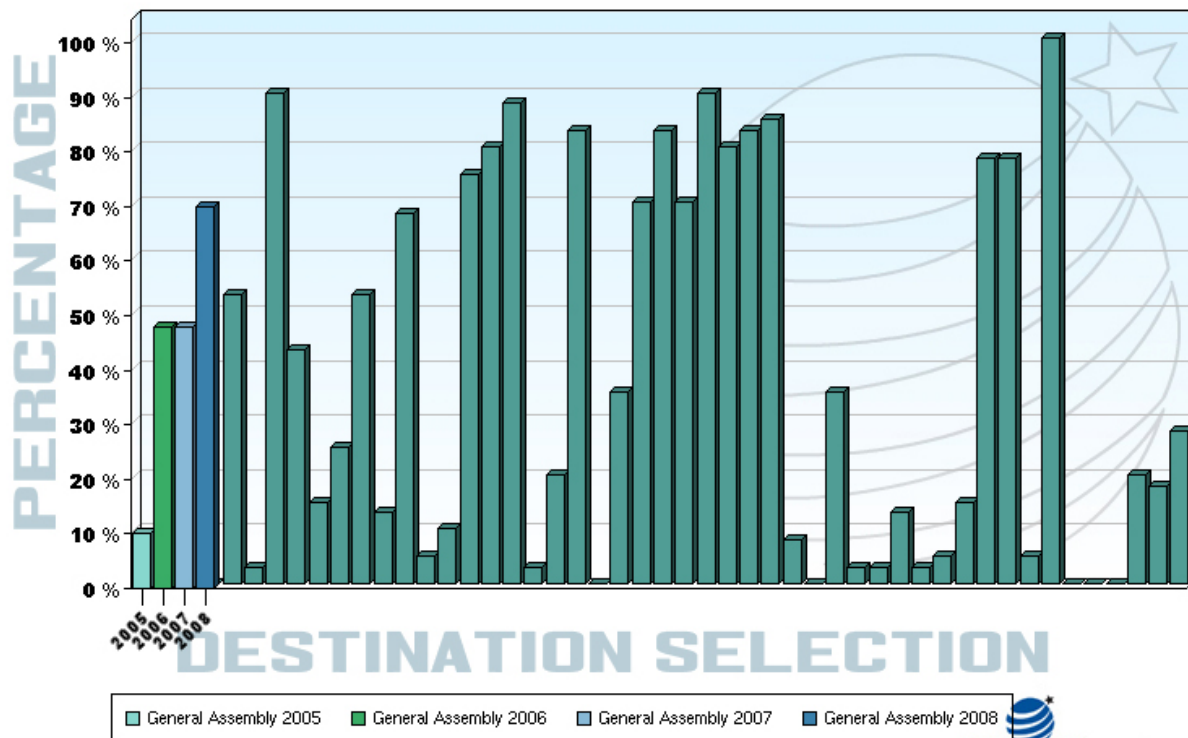
- **CVB engagement:** The Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau was a key partner in the success of UUA's event greening initiative. The CVB was active in:
  - o Facilitating engagement of hotels in green practices.
  - o Promoting participation by hotels in the Florida green lodging program.
  - o Volunteering to provide an unrequested tree-planting community legacy project on behalf of UUA. This program is a new program offered to convention organizers holding

experiences in Fort Lauderdale that was initiated for the General Assembly.

- **Green contract clauses:** The meeting venue, hotels, and the caterers all signed green contract clauses. Expectations included in these clauses are outlined below.

### Lessons Learned

- **Exercising influence:** Destination selection is one of the primary influences on the success of the GA's green initiative. When choosing each city location we have a choice: to either reward cities with strong green practices with our business, or use our green expectations as a way to leverage improved practice by cities that are not traditionally seen as green. Our selection of Portland and Fort Lauderdale illustrates the benefits, opportunities and costs of making both kinds decisions. There is value to both strategies and a balance in approach may be advisable in future.



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## Meeting & Venue Selection

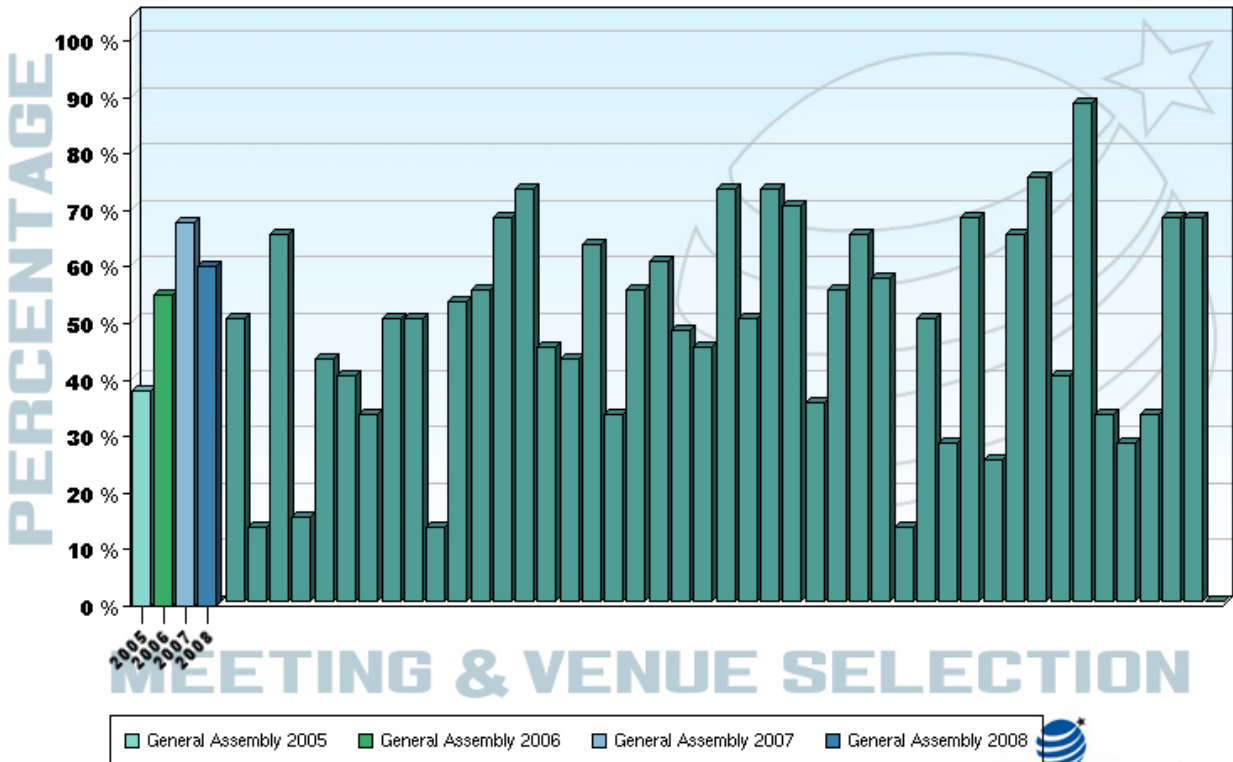
UUA partnered with the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center (FLCC) to improve environmental practices in the following ways:

- **Green contract clause:** The FLCC signed a green contract clause that included the following practices:
  - Reducing the lights, power and HVAC during move in and move out times in the exhibit hall and turning off lights in meeting rooms when not in use. Lights off policies were monitored and followed closely.
  - Removing all polystyrene/#6 plastic from food/beverage functions or outlets.
  - Providing collection bins and facilities, staffing and training necessary to recycle all glass containers, aluminum and steel cans, plastic bottles, table coverings, pallets, paper (newspaper, cardboard and other office paper), and grease.
  - Purchasing and providing all paper bathroom supplies with minimum 35% post-consumer recycled content paper. Use of Green Seal papers was confirmed onsite.
  - Using environmentally responsible cleaning products for carpets, floors, kitchens, and bathrooms. Use of Green Seal cleaning products was confirmed onsite.
  - Measuring recycling rate.
  - Purchasing renewable energy for the conference.
- **Recycling:** FLCC implemented an expanded recycling program for UUA's General Assembly. Prior to the event the center was recycling 10% of their waste which only included cardboard. The center is now recycling plastics, paper, glass and metal on a permanent basis. Diversion during the General Assembly was increased to 18%. In order to achieve this, the FLCC purchased 21 permanent recycling stations and supplemented these with temporary bins that were placed throughout the venue. The three main things that helped increase diversion were back and front of house signage and monitoring, FLCC staff training and oversight and general session announcements.
- **Green power:** Broward County made a precedent-setting decision to source 30% green power for FLCC for the General Assembly. This is a significant achievement and required lengthy negotiation by FLCC staff with the County to change existing practice. It should be noted that FLCC was only contracted to purchase 9% green power.
- **Energy savings:** FLCC typically operates at 50% lighting levels during move in and move out and provides complimentary air conditioning one hour in advance of and during show hours. This aligns with requests made by UUA and actually helps to save money as increasing lighting or AC outside of these parameters would be charged back to UUA at the prevailing hourly rate. In addition to this policy FLCC has replaced 112 - 1,000W fixtures with 400W fixtures, installed back of house lighting motion sensors and is gradually switching out to LED and CFL lights where possible.
- **Water conservation:** FLCC has installed a new closed loop treatment system for cooling towers which has reduced water consumption by 65%.
- **Green purchasing:** In preparation for the General Assembly the FLCC changed to a Green Seal certified line of environmentally responsible floor, washroom and glass cleaners and hand soaps.

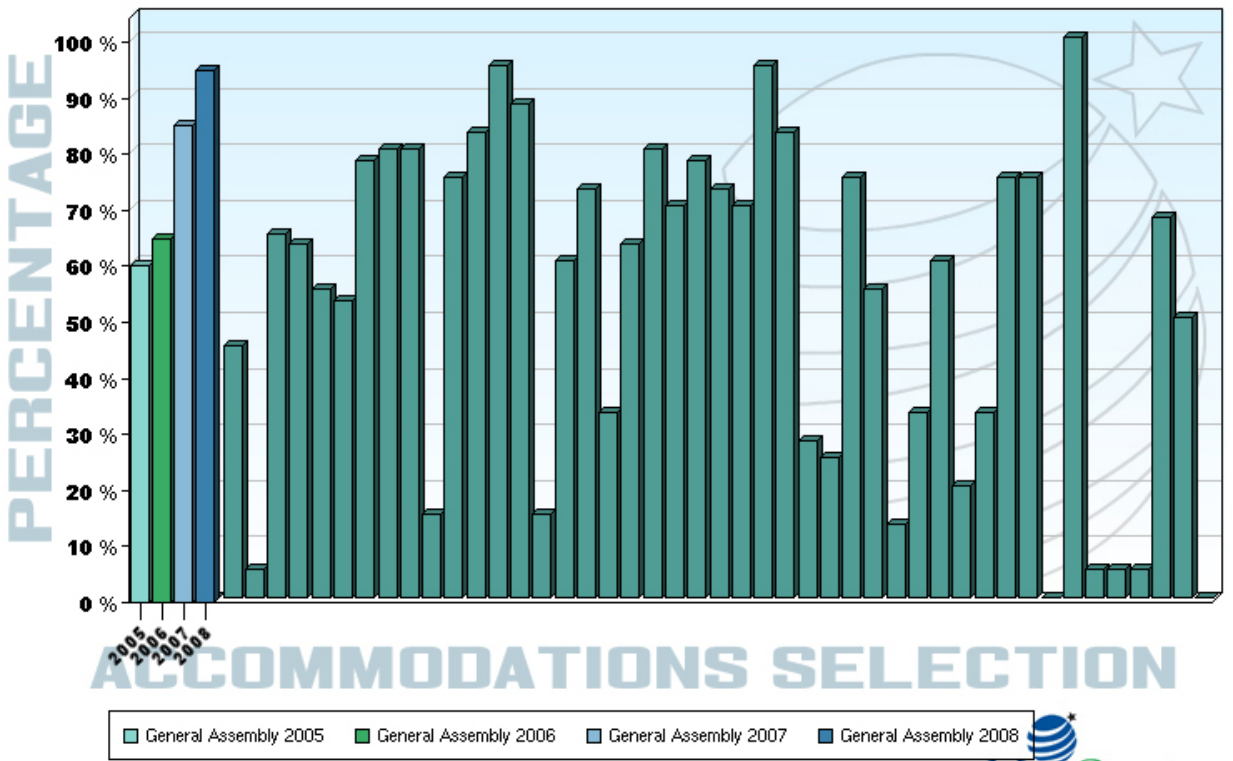
## Lessons Learned

- **Green power:** It took 3 months to confirm that green power could be sourced for the General Assembly. This needs to be anticipated in the event planning timeline when holding GA at another government-managed meeting venue.
  - **Third-party verification of green power programs:** Unfortunately immediately following the event the green power program provided by FLCC's utility was suspended and is presently being investigated. To avoid this disappointment in future UUA and the event venue should request that the green power provider furnish independent verification of administrative fees and project auditing. This is also advised for carbon offset programs.
  - **Recycling:** Being a new project for the FLCC, there were bugs that needed to be worked out of the recycling program. Some of these bugs were anticipated, others were not. Our experience has shown that each year we need to consider how best to use the following to help increase diversion:
    - **Recycling signage:** Clear and ample signage must be placed on all recycling bins at a minimum. This signage should be viewable from all angles of approach to the bins. Ideally signage should include graphic and text descriptions of what materials should be placed in each bin. The facility and hauler need to confirm what waste is acceptable in each stream prior to arriving onsite so that signs can be created in advance. Signs should be placed in the front and back of house areas for attendees and staff.
    - **Recycling station monitors:** Recycling monitors were not used this year as we did not have a composting program. Monitors are recommended if the trash stream is anticipated to be very complicated (which turned out to be the case in Fort Lauderdale)
- and encouraged in areas where high traffic is anticipated and food service available. At a minimum it would help to have recycling monitors staff recycling stations during meal times in the concessions area.
- **Session announcements:** These were most helpful in educating attendees. It is strongly recommended a few minutes be spent telling attendees how to recycle/compost their trash in the opening session and in any newsletters or programs on site.
  - **Staff training:** FLCC staff was very responsive and helpful in fine-tuning new recycling procedures. Bins were placed in requested locations well in advance of opening and regularly emptied. They were also quickly moved to ensure accessibility for scooters and wheelchairs. Some assistance was needed to make sure staff in the concession areas did not contaminate the co-mingled and paper stream, but this was caught early on and remedied immediately. Making centre staff responsible for clearing tables actually helped avoid further contamination as attendees were confused about where to put things like paper plates and utensils. Providing staff training in multiple languages might be helpful.
  - **Bag coding:** FLCC changed waste-management procedures to accommodate our request to have recyclables in clear plastic bags and trash in black bags. Color-coding the waste stream assisted with monitoring and helped staff identify how to treat the waste back of house, particularly where language made it difficult to explain where recyclables should be put on the back dock.
  - **Dock monitor:** FLCC accommodated a late request to instate a dock monitor for move-out day to make sure that waste made its way to the appropriate bin. Dock monitors for move-in and move-out should be requested in future contracts.





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## Accommodations Selection

Overall the hotel community in Fort Lauderdale was very engaged in helping to make guest rooms green during the General Assembly:

- **Green contract clause:** All hotels were contracted for the following green practices. Percent of hotels in compliance with practice was monitored with the assistance of UUA staff and volunteers and is reported in parentheses. For a detailed report please see the Appendix.
  - Lights off when rooms unoccupied (89%)
  - Pull drapes or windows filmed (100%)
  - Regulated HVAC (56%)
  - Linen reuse (100%)
  - Recycling (100% paper, 78% co-mingled)
  - Food donation program (100%)
  - Bulk food provided (89%)
  - Linen/china service (100%)
  - No polystyrene (100%)
  - Don't replace amenities until finished or guest departs (100%)
  - Donate unfinished amenities (78%)
  - Local/organic menus (78%)
  - Environmentally responsible bathroom papers (67%)
  - Environmentally responsible cleaners (100%)
- **Attendee participation:** Housekeeping tracked attendee participation in recycling, turning out lights and the linen re-use program at each hotel, with the exception of the Bahia Mar which did not provide post event reports. Attendee engagement is summarized in the Appendix and varied from 26% - 100%.
- **Green hotel resources:** to assist hotels in meeting our green requirements UUA researched and prepared a resource sheet about how to implement our guidelines. This was distributed to all hotels with the assistance of the CVB and regular check-ins

were conducted to increase compliance.

- **Green certification participation:** Three hotel properties in Fort Lauderdale received Florida Green Hotel Lodging Program Certification as a result of participating in UUA's General Assembly. The Embassy Suites received the One Palm designation several months prior to the event, with the Hyatt Pier 66 and Comfort Suites receiving theirs in June and July 2008. All hotels cited preparation for the General Assembly as a motivator for applying for the designation. Two other properties – the Best Western Oceanside and Sheraton Yankee Clipper – are also pursuing certification.

## Lessons Learned

- **Contract compliance:** Virtually all hotels undertook significant efforts to comply with the green guidelines, however compliance was not 100%. UUA may want to explore incentive or punitive measures to improve compliance in future. Only one hotel was uncooperative in furnishing complete requested information and measurables.
- **Partnership approach:** As part of our on-site commitment, Meeting Strategies Worldwide provided an open invitation to meet with each hotel property to discuss their sustainability strategies and any challenges they had experienced while preparing for the Assembly. All but one property took advantage of this opportunity which received much positive feedback.
- **Advocacy:** In addition to contracting for green practices Meeting Strategies Worldwide has provided feedback to the corporate office of Starwood concerning their policy to use #6 plastic disposable cups in guest rooms rather than re-useable or recyclable cups. The Florida Green Lodging Program has also been advised of the need for composting service in Broward County in order to facilitate increased participation in the Program from Fort Lauderdale.

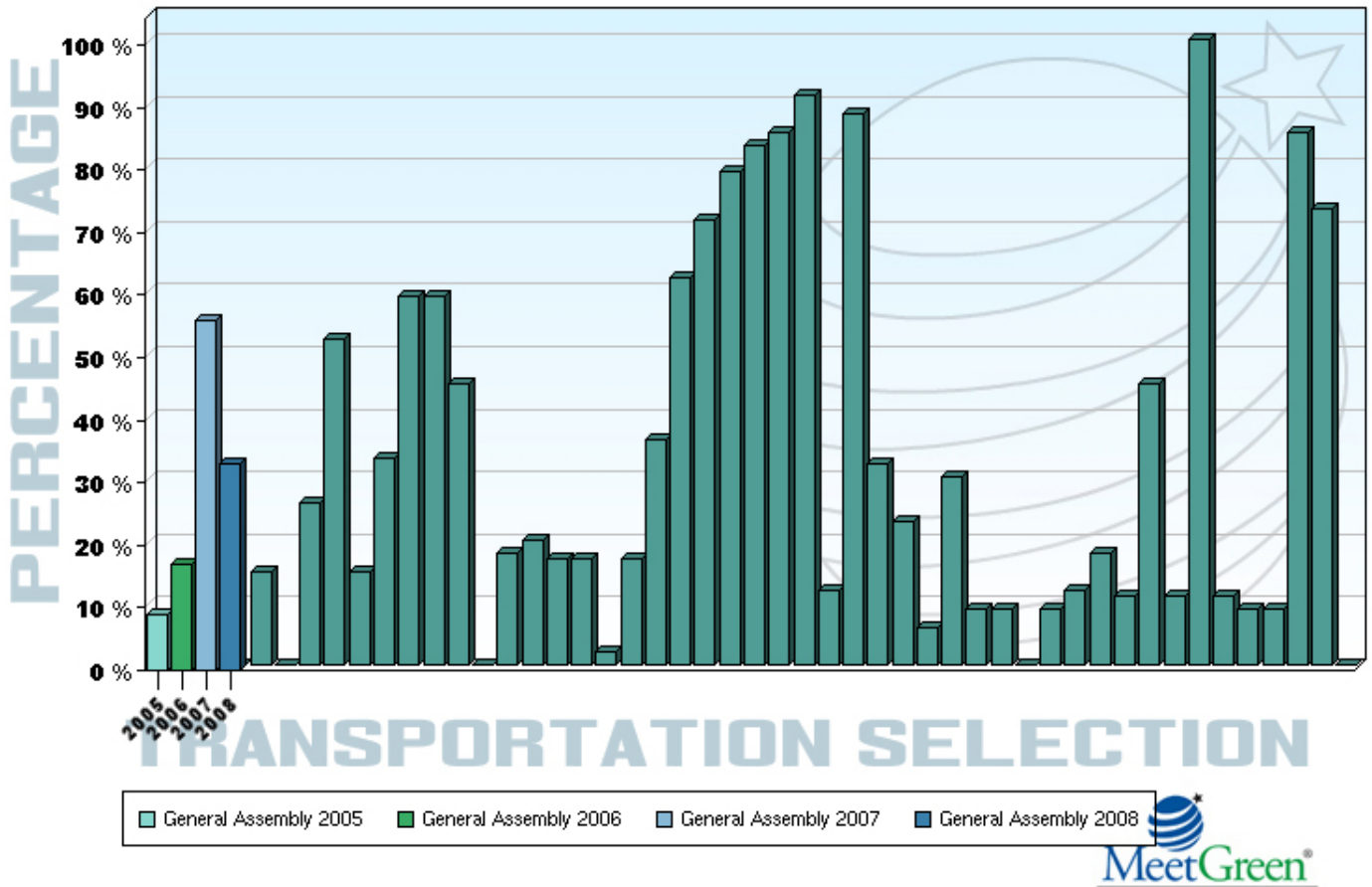
## Transportation Selection

Points earned in this category reflect UUA's provision of a voluntary carbon offset program:

- Carbon offset program:** UUA integrated a voluntary carbon offset program into their registration system. \$5406 was raised for Carbon Fund. 30% of attendees contributed to the carbon offset program which represents a higher than average participation rate. Voluntary carbon offset programs typically receive 5% participation. Participants offset approximately 540 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

## Lessons Learned

- Ground shuttles:** Due to mobility, local climate and distance it was necessary to provide shuttles between the hotels and FLCC. Should this be done again UUA may want to include environmental requirements for shuttles in their RFP and contract for these services. Requirements may include requests for:
  - Higher efficiency engines.
  - Low sulfur diesel or bio-diesel.
  - Minimized idling.
  - Recycling of oil, tires and antifreeze.
- Measurables:** Ridership on shuttles should also be tracked to gauge use. This will assist in planning for future use and maximizing occupancy for most efficient fuel use.



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## Food & Beverage

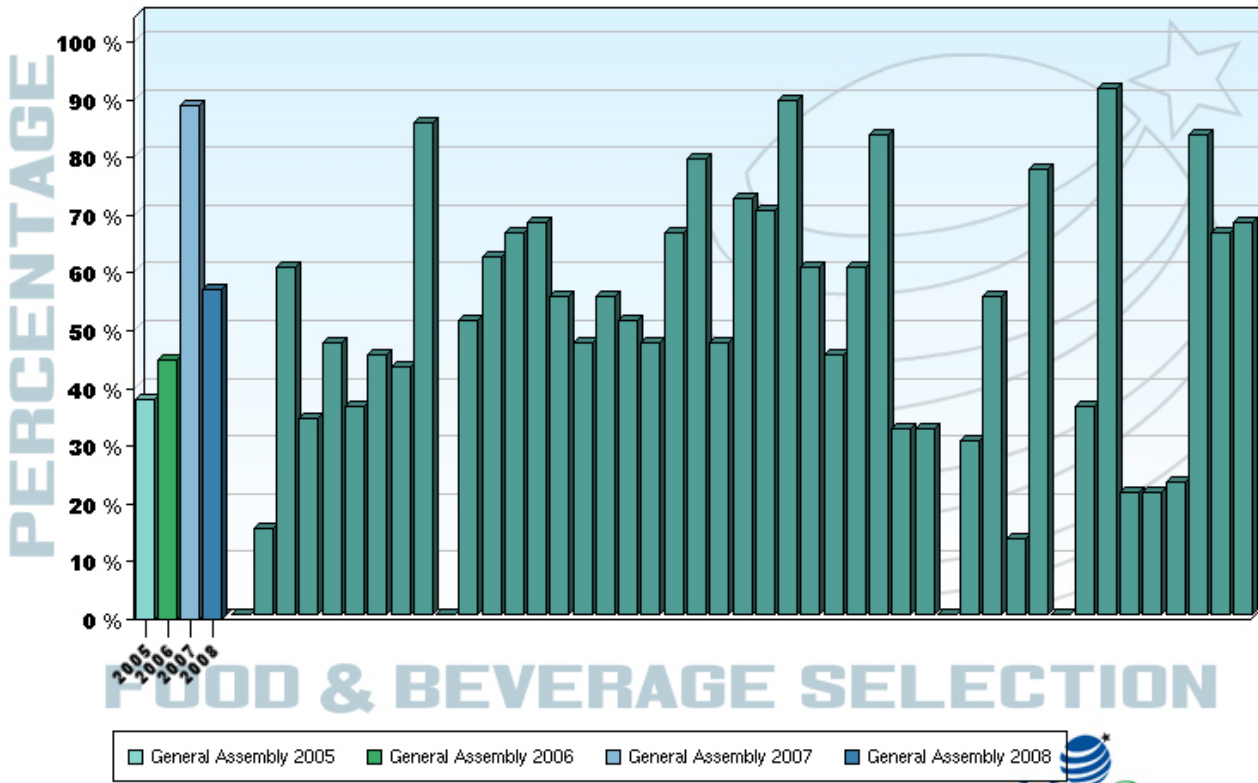
The UUA arranges for paid concessions for attendees and does not provide catered pre-paid meals for participants. When planning for concessions UUA does make green expectations explicit with the caterer.

- **Green contract clause:** The FLCC was contracted to and provided the following sustainable catering practices. This was the first time these practices were adopted at the venue:
  - o Served juice, ice tea, coffee and water in pitchers rather than individual containers. This was provided at lunch buffets. Concessions made bottled beverages available for purchase.
  - o Used biodegradable disposable service ware.
  - o Eliminated the use of #6 plastic and polystyrene.
  - o Served condiments in bulk.
  - o Donated left over food.
- **Compostable service ware:** FLCC completely and permanently eliminated complex plastics from the venue and replaced them with biodegradable alternatives at the request of the UUA. This was provided at no additional cost.

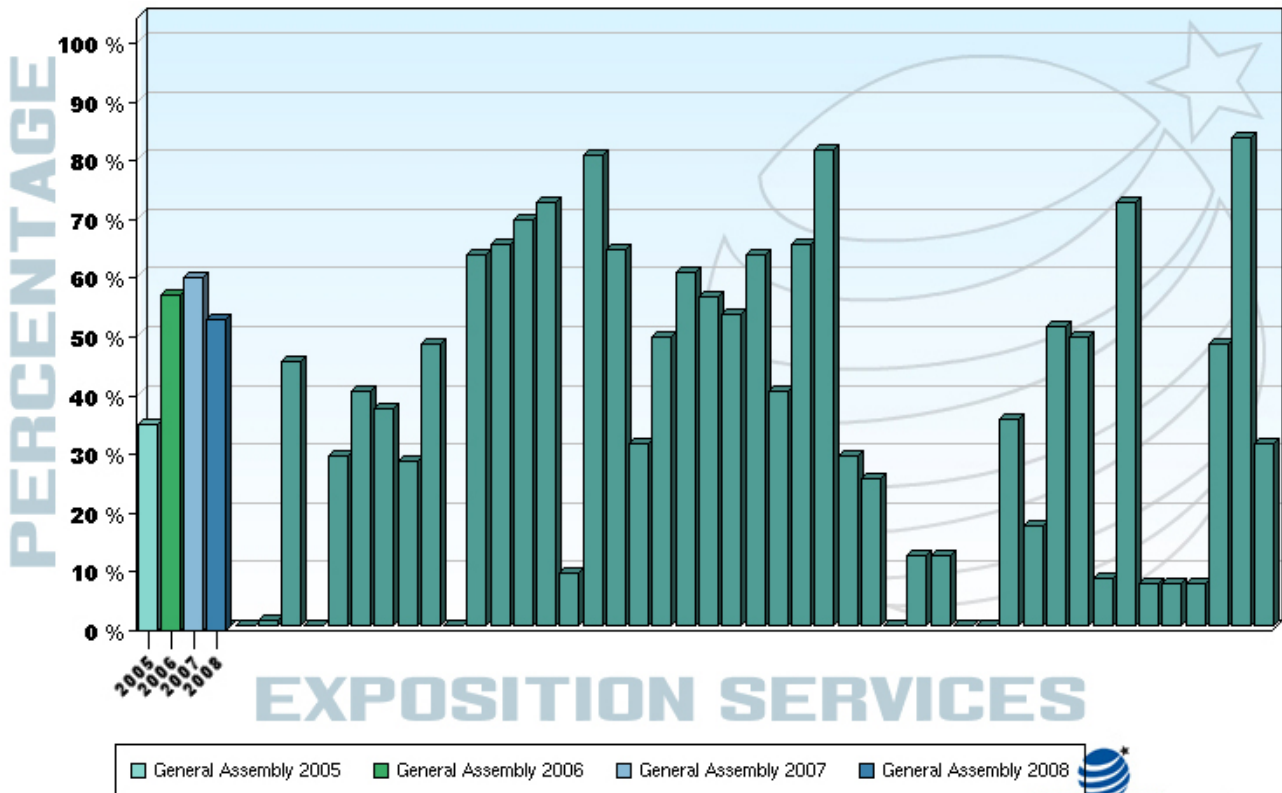
- **Sustainable food:** UUA requested and received a 20% local and organic menu at concessions. In addition caterers were required to provide additional vegetarian and vegan options at concessions. This was provided at no additional cost.
- **Food donation:** 1080 lbs of left over food was donated.

## Lessons Learned

- **Composting:** UUA staff requested and the venue was prepared to provide composting. All service ware had been switched to a compostable option and bins were available to accommodate the additional waste stream. Unfortunately a hauler for organic waste could not be found in Broward County. Moving forward destinations should be selected on the basis of their ability to provide a composting option. With food waste being the heaviest waste stream from the event, lack of composting made it difficult to reach Portland's level of performance in this category.
- **Staff training:** As indicated above staff training was important in helping to keep the waste stream in concession areas uncontaminated.
- **Local economic contribution:** UUA is encouraged to request an estimate of the food and beverage budget invested in local and organic options.



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## Exposition Services

The following best practices were implemented for the General Assembly 2008:

- **Green contract clause:** Heritage Exposition Services agreed to provide the following green practices for the exhibit:
  - Require minimum work lighting, power and no HVAC during set up and move out.
  - Provide service kits and exhibitor ordering online. Any mailed kits will be mailed using recyclable paper.
  - Use pre-cut table top vinyl and try to recycle/reuse the vinyl during dismantling.
  - Use biodegradable trash liners.
  - Print booth headers, aisle signs and show banners using water based inks and use renewable forest substrates.
  - Use EnergyStar lighting for registration counters.
  - Provide computer kiosks, magazine bins and shelving that are made out of reusable materials.
  - Reuse and then recycle aisle and booth carpet.
  - Use biodegradable shipping and packing materials.
  - Use local labor.
  - Train staff to participate in on-site recycling programs and environmental initiatives.
  - Power forklifts with propane gas to assist in air quality.
- **Measuring practice:** Heritage attempted to track some of their environmental practices for the first time this year:
  - 95% of show carpet was re-used.
  - 100% of drape was re-used.
  - 100% of show signage was re-used, either in tact, or by using the other side of substrates.
  - Some table-top vinyl was also retained for future shows however this was not tracked. This was particularly important as this material could not be recycled at FLCC.

- **Exhibitor practices:** Exhibitors were provided with a list of voluntary green guidelines in the show manual, which included tips for designing a more sustainable exhibit booth.

## Lessons Learned

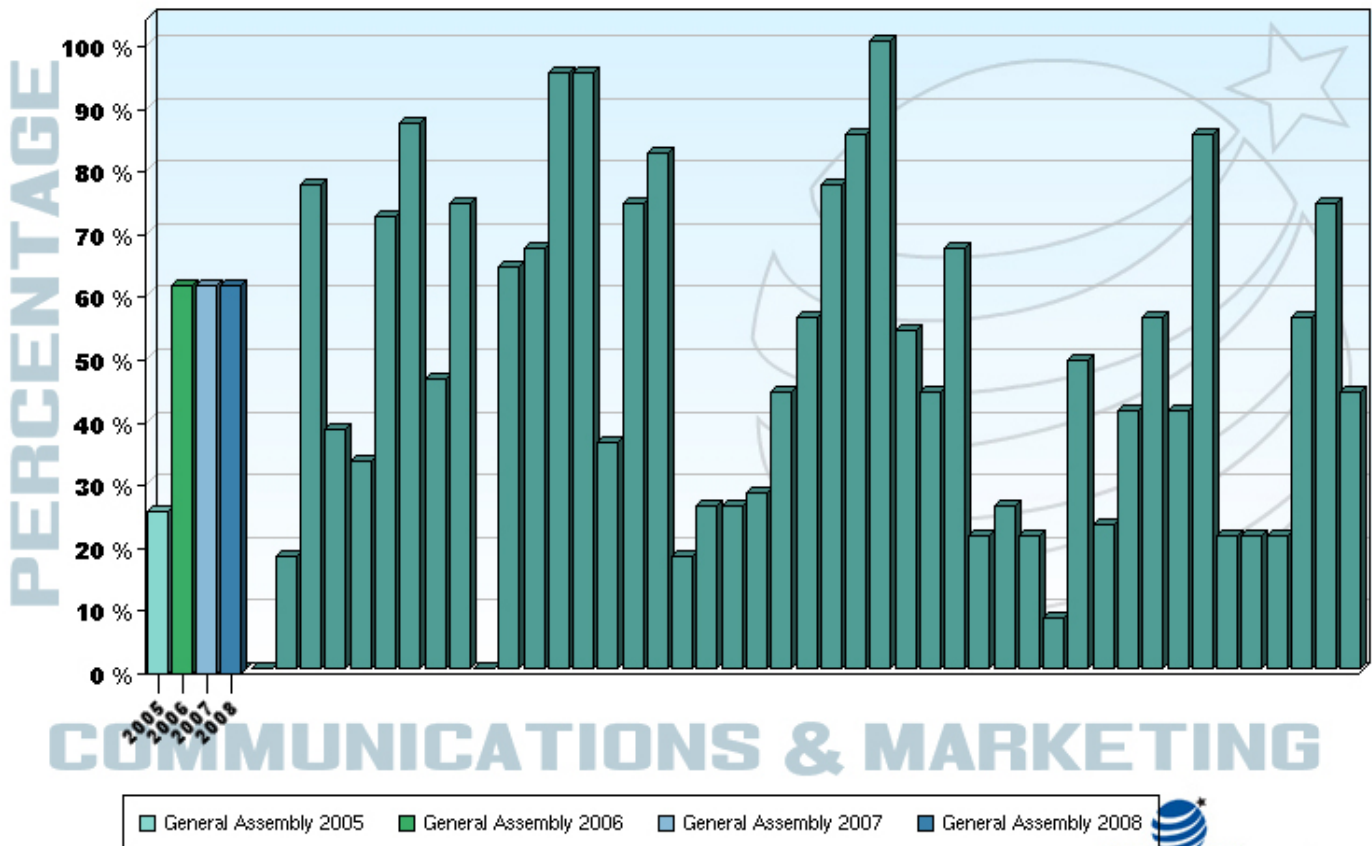
- **Attendee education:** There are opportunities to more actively engage exhibitors in on-site green initiatives. Attendees are presently provided with recommended guidelines in the on-site manual. In addition to this UUA may want to consider a pre-show email communications series that could provide ideas and essential information for exhibitors to green their participation in the show. Incentives such as a green booth award could also be explored. UUA may want to consider removing waste paper bins from exhibitor booths to promote increased recycling. Exhibitors should be directed to use recycling stations on the show floor.
- **Measurement:** Heritage provided some preliminary basic measurables to track the success of their green practices. UUA is encouraged to start a dialogue with Heritage about what other measurables could be collected in future years and include these requirements in their contract.
- **Responsible purchasing:** The decorator is already re-using many show materials including drape, tabletop vinyl, carpet and signage. In addition they do provide a sustainable signage substrate. There is an opportunity to also research and source non-vinyl table top alternatives and recycled content carpet for any new purchases.
- **Donations area:** UUA may want to consider working with the meeting venue, CVB and decorator to facilitate a donation program. This would collect and make leftover show materials available to a community service organization.

## Communications & Marketing

Over the last four years UUA has made strides to engage attendees in greening and switch to more online forms of communication, while cutting paper use:

- **Attendee communication:** UUA included information about the event greening initiative on the conference web site, in on site newsletters and made mention of it in sessions.
- **Digital communication:** UUA has been gradually switching to more online methods of communication and cutting back on paper use. This has included providing an opt-out option to not receive a mailed hard copy of the event program. 30% of attendees requested this option in 2008. By reducing pre-mailers UUA has avoided the printing of 36,000 pages per year since 2005, saving 20 trees over the last 4 years. In addition all vendor event orders were sent electronically.

- **Recycled paper:** All hard-copy communications produced by UUA before the event were printed on 10% and 30% (cover/page stock) post-consumer recycled content paper using vegetable based inks.
- **Local talent:** All evening entertainment provided during the Assembly was local.
- **Community Service Project:** UUA contributed \$24,500 to Hispanic Unity as a legacy project from the General Assembly.
- **Programming:** Session programming does provide information on social and environmental responsibility. The Ministry for the Earth also provides information to attendees through a booth in the exhibit hall. In addition, GA's web site provides tools for congregations regarding Socially Responsible Investing, which was a featured discussion at the event this year.



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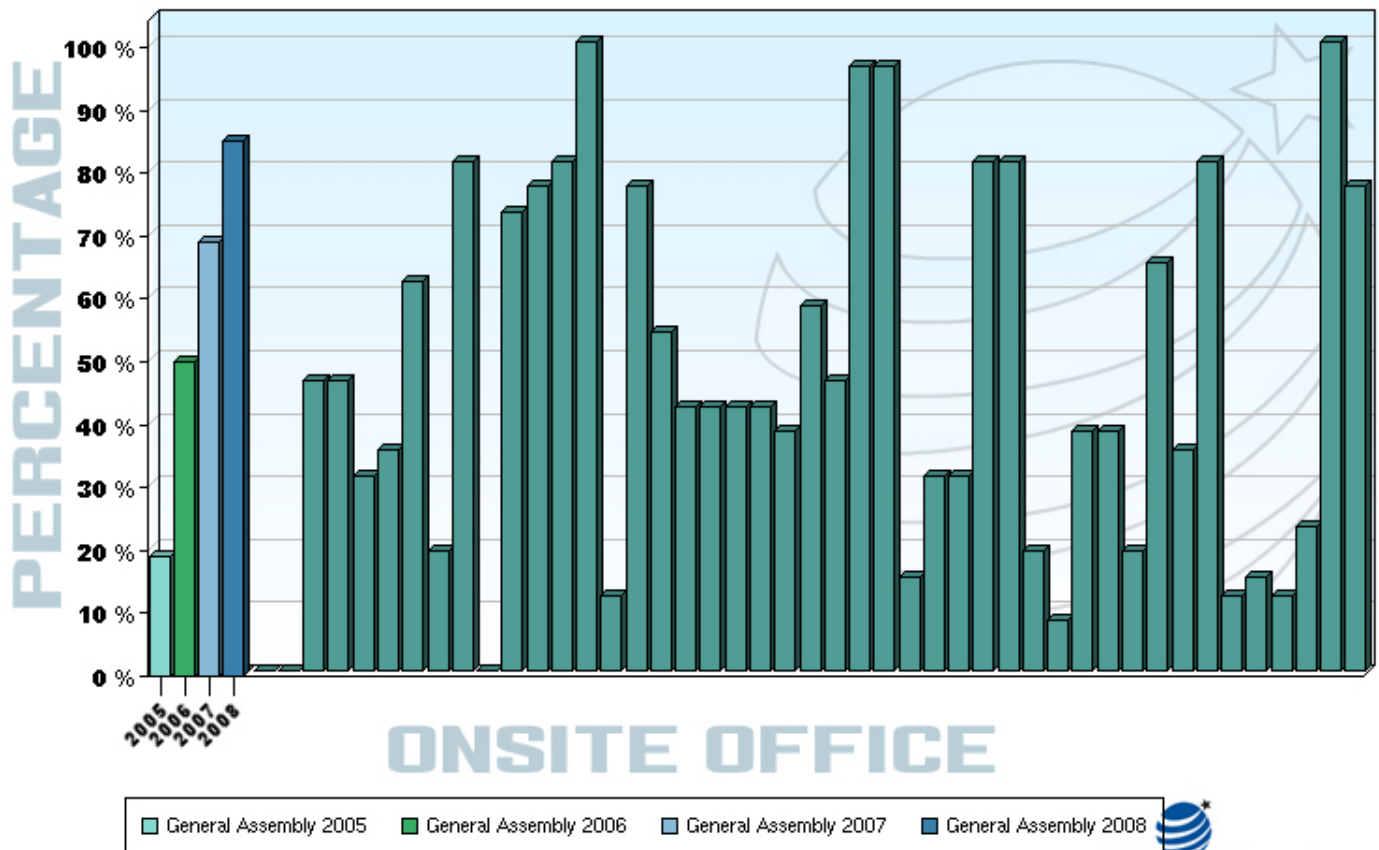
## On-site Office

The 2008 General Assembly adopted the following best practices for the on-site show office:

- Boxes were re-used for shipping post-show.
- The onsite office was stocked with 100% post-consumer recycled content paper.
- All onsite signage continues to be reused, with the exception of 2008 branded kick panels. Back sides of these panels will be reused.

## Lessons Learned

- **Name badges:** UUA does not presently collect name badges for re-use or recycling. It may be worth researching recycled content and recyclable name badges as well as biodegradable ribbons as new options are emerging.



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## THE JOURNEY AHEAD.....

The most important lesson learned in greening this year's General Assembly has been that different destinations have different capacities to meet UUA's green requirements. That said, despite the obstacles of no local composting, lower recycling diversion and the need to provide ground transportation, progress was made in many areas – particularly destination and accommodation selection and measurement of exhibit practices.

Moving forward UUA will want to consider the specific recommendations given above. These recommendations relate to the following themes which will help UUA continue to improve the sustainability of its meeting practices:

**Creating partnerships:** UUA stresses a partnership approach with all vendors. This involves continually emphasizing parties' shared success in making good, sustainable things happen, from an environmental, social and business perspective. A collaborative approach was very effective in securing cooperation of hotels, facility managers and the CVB who were then motivated to improve practice. Bringing new partners into the fold will only increase success.

**Performing due diligence:** The need for site visits to hotels, back of house tours and onsite monitoring in addition to securing measurable and verifiable data about negative and positive

impacts will become increasingly important in future. Collecting data and disclosing it through post-event reports will help ensure UUA's efforts to be green are credible and transparent and not at risk of greenwash.

**Considering social responsibility:** UUA has been very active in reducing waste and promoting energy efficiency and water conservation. Community projects and fundraising also ensure legacies are left in host destinations. In addition UUA communicates with Unite This to ensure disclosure of any labor issues related to event partners and has undertaken an Equal Opportunity Audit of destinations in previous years. Into the future opportunities exist to coordinate environmental and social responsibility initiatives to implement a holistic sustainable event strategy. In addition UUA may want to consider how purchasing can promote both environmental and social responsibility, such as fair trade and labor practices and workplace diversity.

**Educating attendees:** UUA is encouraged to continue to engage attendees in creative and active ways. It is clear that participants at the General Assembly want to do the right thing environmentally by having a green stay, recycling and supporting community and conservation causes. Ensuring they expand their awareness of these opportunities through the web site, pre-event emails and event programs is important.



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